

# Documenting Celebrations

by DHP Advisory Committee of the Central New York Library Resources Council

## Why Document?

To capture important historical moments  
To increase awareness and interest in the relationship between past and present  
To provide a model for future celebrations.

## What and Who to Document?

**All aspects of the celebration should be documented such as:**

Meetings - organizational and planning  
Programs and Events  
Newsletters and Publications  
Planners  
Committee Members  
Sponsors  
Participants  
Audiences

## Materials Documenting Celebrations

Personal Journals  
Published and Printed Materials  
Photographs, Film and Videos  
Correspondence  
Oral Histories

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**If you have questions** about this tip sheet or other preservation topics, **contact:**

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## When to Document?

Begin with the first organizational or planning meeting. Continue until the celebration or event is over

## How to Document?

One person should be designated to keep the materials together. As soon as possible after taking the photographs or the videos, identify the date, event, people, and location. Meeting minutes, clippings, programs and other papers should have dates.

Try to sort and organize materials for easy use while the celebration is in progress and so the materials are in order for placement in a permanent collection.

Avoided storing the material in basements, attics or garages. Dampness and temperature extremes will damage paper and photographs

When in doubt, **DON'T** throw it out!

## Where to Place the Documentation?

The materials documenting an important celebration should be placed in a permanent location or "repository" where the records are kept secure, organized and accessible. The Permanent Location could be:

The archives of the sponsoring organization

A local historical society

With the local government historian

A public library local history collection

A local government records repository

A college or university archive or special collection

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*Celebrations should be remembered and documented.* The depth of documentation will be different for annual events and for special events such as centennials.

*Annual celebrations* can be documented with administrative records for the event. There will probably be no need for additional efforts.

*Special celebrations* that involve a wide variety of community members will need to have specific documentation efforts built in from the very beginning.

Someone should be designated "*event historian*" who:

**Will save** all relevant materials...

**Label and organize** them in such a way that they can be used.

See that they are **placed in an organized collection** or repository

*Well-documented celebrations will be remembered* much more vividly and will remind sponsors and participants of the successful event.

## About Time Capsules

The creation of a time capsule is often considered during the planning of a celebration. Time capsules are fun, and their appeal is understandable. But the actuality is often disappointing. Most time capsules are buried or placed in cornerstones. When removed after 50 or 100 years, most materials placed in them have deteriorated to the point to where they can't be handled or read. An alternative is to place the time capsule in an acid-free box in a permanent location or repository that has temperature and humidity controls. The time capsule box could be sealed for the desired time and opened at the appointed hour. Because it would be stored in a protected environment the material would be in relatively good condition when retrieved.

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